

INFORMATION REPORT INFORMATION REPORT

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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REPORT

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report on medical services 50X1-HUM

in Albania. The report includes brief information on diseases common in Albania, hospitals in Tirana and Soviet Bloc medical advisers. The report also gives a few general impressions of Albania during

1955 - 1956.

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1. The standard of living in Albania was very low. The average monthly pay of an industrial worker was 3,000-4,000 leca and that of a doctor about 5,000 leca, while a pair of sandals cost 3,000 leca. Peasant families in the mountains lived in wood frame houses, without windows, together with their livestock, and the entire family slept on wooden boards in the middle of the single room lighted by sheep's tallow. It was not uncommon in Albania for a mother to nurse a four-year old child. Mutton and barley bread constituted the chief diet of the country. The situation was hardly better in cities. In most houses, there were no sanitary installations, such as sewerage, water pipes, and the indoor lavatories. Under such conditions it was not surprising that the standard of public health was extremely low.

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2. The medical services in Albania were very primitive and backward. Hospitals and clinics were scarce, while the existing medical institutions lacked adequate equipment and a sufficient staff of doctors. In 1955, Albania had 120 doctors, of whom 60 were experienced physicians; most of these men had graduated from medical schools in Italy, to a lesser extent from schools in France. Of these 60 doctors, 10 were supposedly tuberculosis specialists but, in fact, only about five knew their profession. The other 60 doctors had graduated after World War II from medical schools in the USSR, Hungary, Rumania, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia. In 1952, the first medical school was established in Tirana under the direction of second-rate Soviet doctors.
3. Epidemics of exanthematic typhus and tuberculosis were very common in Albania. Albania had about one million inhabitants, and about 150,000 lived in Tirana, the capital. However, the official census figure could not be considered reliable, for in many areas, particularly the mountain areas, the people failed to report for registration or examination. This was also the reason why no accurate statistics on the incidence of tuberculosis were available. The three TB hospitals in the entire state (in Tirana, Korce and Shkoder) contained, at the most, 1,200 beds.

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4. The following hospitals in Tirana were reported:
 - a. The central tuberculosis hospital, which contained 300 to 400 beds. It was housed in a number of formerly private, Turkish buildings and one hall that the Italians had once used for breeding pigeons. Some of the hospital rooms contained three or four beds, but most of them had as many as 30. The hospital buildings lay close to a dirt road (name not recalled) and had no sanitary installations (water pipes, lavatories, etc.). Only very severe cases, with positive Koch test results, were admitted to the hospital. Cases considered hopeless were centralized in one of the hospital wings, where they were left without treatment under appalling sanitary conditions. The supply of Soviet streptomycin, P.A.S. and nicotibine was insufficient. Patients were usually hospitalized for a much shorter period than the minimum required, and they therefore remained a source of contagion, especially to their families. The Tirana Hospital performed lung surgery (thoracoplasty and extrapleuralis ?), but its methods were primitive and painful, and post-operative mortality was high. The death rate in TB cases was generally very high, but no statistical figures are available.
 - b. A military hospital which, unlike the others, was at least clean. Its director was Sinan Imami, who had served in the same

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capacity during the Italian occupation.

c. A general civilian hospital (no further details).

5. In 1956, there was not a single tomography apparatus in Albania. Industrial workers and people employed in public institutions had to undergo periodic examination. There were rumors that micrograph (?) tests had been introduced in various parts of the country but, because of the lack of equipment, the shortage of doctors and sanitary personnel, the results were not noticeable.
6. To solve their medical problems, the Albanians invited medical advisers from the USSR, Rumania, Hungary and Czechoslovakia. As a rule, the Albanians accepted the advice of the Soviet doctors out of fear, but they ignored the suggestions of the others. The Hungarian and Czech doctors left in a rage before their contracts had expired, while the Rumanians stayed on but did not insist on having their advice and demands carried out. During the year 1955-1956, there were five Rumanian doctors serving in Albania: A TB specialist, a bacteriologist, a doctor for internal diseases, and two pediatricists. A doctor who undertook to stay in Albania more than one year was allowed to bring his family with him. While they were in Albania, Rumanian doctors continued to receive their full Rumanian salary plus 20,000 leca a month and 350 lei, which were paid in rubles. They were permitted to buy in special shops where the quality of the goods was high and the prices below the market rates. Albanian

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citizens who were sent money in hard currency from abroad could also buy at these shops at a 30 per cent reduction. At first the Rumanian doctors were accommodated in the Diati Hotel, the only large and good hotel in Tirana. Later they were given private apartments and the hotel was reserved for Soviets only.

7. There was no sanitary examination of food products in Albania, and no other means to ensure public health. Mehmet Shehu, chairman of the Council of Ministers and second in the hierarchy after Enver Hoxha, was responsible for health problems. He called a few meetings with the foreign medical advisers and discussed with them problems of medical cadres, equipment, immunization, B.C.G. tests, etc., but none of these meetings went beyond the stage of discussions. On the other hand, the authorities set up a special hospital for Party Central Committee members, which was run by a Soviet professor and was very well equipped.

8. The following were general impressions of Albania: 50X1-HUM
 - a. In 1955-1956, Albania maintained excellent relations with the USSR on the basis of complete subservience to Moscow. The country was full of Soviet experts and personnel.
 - b. At the time in question, the Communist leadership maintained its rule by increasing terror. Enver Hoxha had his brother-in-law killed and, as a result, his sister became insane and had

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to be hospitalized. If an Albanian defected to Italy or Greece and did not return within three months, his whole family was arrested.

- c. There were very many political prisoners, all public works being carried out by them and by criminal convicts. Often these prisoners were left to sleep out of doors.
- d. The Soviets were greatly disliked and, in spite of their fear of the security services, even prominent Albanians often gave vent to this hatred. The animosity was chiefly due to the fact that the Soviets had virtually taken over the country. Moreover, the Albanians had set high expectations on union with Italy, which had indeed been proclaimed during the Italian occupation. At that time, the Italians had established a number of maternity hospitals, had paved roads, constructed large buildings, and made it possible for Albanians to work in Italy, thereby alleviating their economic plight.
- e. Albania had virtually no industry; Until 1956, the main plant was the Stalin Textile Works, which the Soviets had set up in Tirana. The Albanians had little confidence in the produce of this factory and preferred to buy cloth from people who had received gift parcels from abroad.

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